



H.Con.Res. 255 – Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the United States commitment to preservation of religious and cultural sites and condemning instances where sites are desecrated

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Con.Res. 255 is being considered on the floor under suspension of the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Mike Ferguson (R-NJ) on November 13, 2007. The Committee on Foreign Affairs agreed to seek consideration under suspension of the rules on February 27, 2008.

H.Con.Res. 255 is expected to be considered on the floor of the House on September 23, 2008.

SUMMARY

H.Con.Res. 255 resolves that Congress:

- Expresses strong support for the work of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and for the European countries that continue to work to preserve sacred historical sites, despite ongoing challenges;
- Expresses strong sentiments to the Government of Lithuania that the people of the United States believe the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, must not be further desecrated;
- Declares that constructive bilateral relations between Lithuania and the United States are important to the governments, citizens, and shared agendas of both countries; and
- Declares that if the Government of Lithuania fails to immediately stop construction and protect the Jewish cemetery located in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius, Lithuania, it will jeopardize its important relationship with the United States and its standing in the international community.

BACKGROUND

The United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad was founded by Congress (P.L. 99-83). The Commission seeks to identify and report on cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings in Eastern and Central Europe which are associated with the heritage of the United States. The Commission has over 20 agreements in effect with foreign governments assuring the protection of these sites. Many of these historical sites are Jewish cultural locations which went uncared for during and after the Holocaust.

Although Lithuania signed a bilateral agreement with the U.S. in 2002 agreeing to preserve certain cultural properties, the government of Lithuania has permitted ongoing construction in a historic Jewish cemetery in Vilnius, Lithuania. Lithuanian scholars believe that the cemetery in the Snipiskes area of Vilnius dates back to the 13th century and is the resting place for over 50,000 Jews.

[United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad](#)

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